

# The Ascension

SEPTEMBER 2022

ASCENSIONPITTSBURGH.ORG



Make a Splash:  
Jump into Life at  
Ascension this Fall

# Jump into Life at Ascension this Fall



By Jonathan Millard, Rector

[jonathan.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:jonathan.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



## **Newcomers – we’re delighted you’re here**

Come to a Newcomer Cookout on Sunday, September 4 at 5:00 pm. We are so glad that you have found Ascension and we would love to meet you. Sign up on the website!

## **Get to know more about Ascension**

Come to Explore Ascension on Saturday, September 10. This is a great way to learn more about Anglicanism and our life together at Ascension. Sign up on the website!

## **Join a Community Group**

Kevin Antlitz, our Assistant Rector, is working hard to expand the number of groups we have to ensure that there is room for everyone who would like to be a part of a Community Group. These small groups of parishioners meet in people’s homes across the city and are the very best way to belong, find real community, and do life together on our Christian journeys.

## **Register for the Parish Retreat**

Our annual retreat (Sept 30 – Oct 2) in the Laurel Highlands, at the Laurelville Retreat Center is one of the highlights of the year. Each year more than 300 people from Ascension gather for a weekend away (about a one hour’s drive from the city) for a time of refreshment, renewal, and great fellowship together. Come one, come all - single, married, older, or younger. This is a weekend for everyone! This year our new bishop, Alex Cameron, and his wife Tamara, will be with us. Bishop Alex will join the Ascension clergy team in leading reflections on the theme of “The Good Shepherd.”



### **Serve in a Ministry**

There are all kinds of opportunities. Check out the website or talk to one of our Ascension staff for more details.

### **Take Note of Prayer Opportunities**

If you are not already a part of one of our online prayer gatherings that meet on four different afternoons each week, please consider checking it out—details on page 24.

### **A Word About Our Finances**

As you will see from the update from our treasurer (page 26) we are currently 5% down year to date for gifts to our operating budget. I appreciate that the current financial climate and the rise in inflation have put strains on many families. However, I do ask you prayerfully to consider whether you may

be able to help close the budget gap. Often, we wait till towards the end of the year to issue a special reminder to folks to give. But it seems right and a matter of good stewardship to lay the needs before the congregation now.

### **Finally, Come and Join us – In Person**

If you have gotten out of the habit of coming to church in person week by week, I encourage all who are able to come back and be among your brothers and sisters in Christ. The Livestream has been a tremendous lifeline to so many over the course of the pandemic, and for a few will need to continue to be so – but it is a poor substitute for the fellowship and embodied worship that we can experience together in person. Not only that, we miss you!

# Building Project Update



By Jonathan Millard, Rector

[jonathan.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:jonathan.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

## Town Hall Meeting – Save the Date

We are planning to hold a Town Hall Meeting on Wednesday, September 7 at 7:00 pm (details in the coming weeks). The purpose of this meeting is to bring everyone up to date with what has been happening with our buildings, to share and explain the final design, to lay out the expected timeline ahead to completion, and to walk through some of the practical implications for us during construction. There will also be plenty of time for questions.

## Construction Should Start Soon

At the time of writing, we are just weeks away from receiving firm bids from contractors on the work that is set before us to extend our old parish hall and significantly improve our facilities. God-willing, we hope to break ground in September. Once we have a firm start date, we will schedule a special ground-breaking service to mark this significant milestone at Ascension.

## What has been happening?

Over the last many months, we have been refining the design for the new building. This has included nearly bi-weekly zoom calls or phone conversations with the architects; facility walk-throughs with the general contractor; careful attention to our financial progress; and discovering more about roofs, flooring, sound and security systems than we ever imagined we would want or need to know!

## Are We on Track with the More Than Stones Capital Campaign?

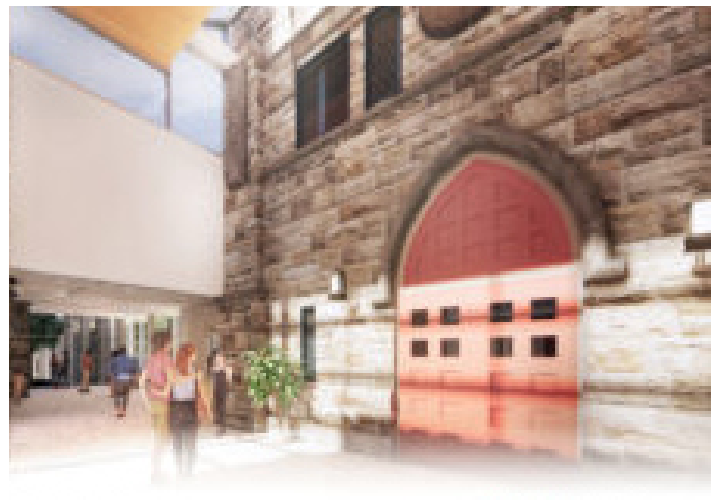
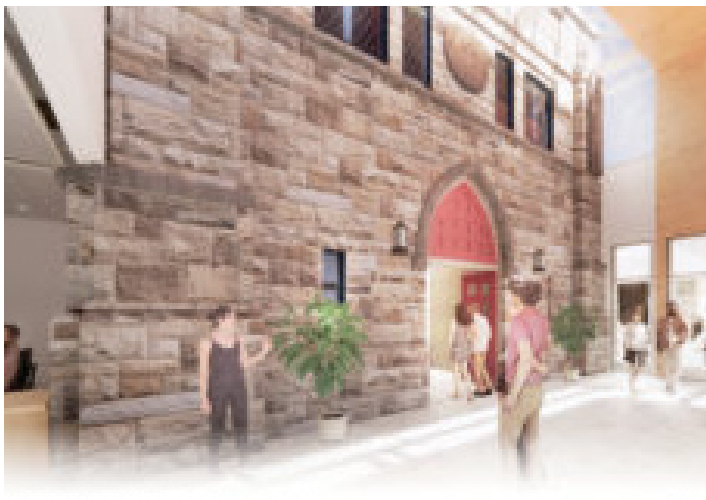
The resounding good news, that we have previously shared, is that we exceeded our initial financial target of raising \$8.2 million and in fact raised \$8.5 million. Thanks be to

God and to each and every person who has been a part of this herculean effort. For those who are new to Ascension or who, for whatever reason, may not yet have been a part of this, we would love for you to participate. I or any member of the staff or vestry would be delighted to tell you how you can participate.

## Will We Have Enough Money To Do All That We Planned?

From the start, we committed not to go into debt to accomplish this project. To that end, we have worked very carefully with the architects. Indeed, when initial cost estimates for the design came in at the start of the year, the projected costs were too high. I will never forget the meeting during which I said to the architects, “we need to find a way to reduce costs by a million dollars.” To the great credit of our architectural team, and as a testimony to their collaboration, pursuit of excellence, and professionalism – not only did no one fall off his or her chair, but they came back several months later with a detailed design that we all liked more than the original proposal, and which included savings of about \$850,000. Since then, the architects and general contractor have continued to sharpen their pencils and do everything possible to keep costs in line.

I hardly need to remind anyone of the extraordinary financial pressures and uncertainties that are the backdrop for our building project. Inflation and global supply chain issues are having a significant impact on this project. Will we have enough? I don't know. Nevertheless, I am confident that the Lord will provide and that we need not fear. Please continue to pray for every aspect of the work that is set before us.



# Parish Retreat: The Good Shepherd



By Marilyn Chislaghi, Director of Ministry

[marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org); (412) 621-4361, ext. 219

**W**e are delighted that our Parish Retreat is happening again this year – had we not had to cancel in 2020 it would be our

**40th year anniversary since Ascension began hosting retreats in 1982. They've grown much since then, so much so that we book the entire facility.**

This is such a unique opportunity to come together as a church family, and particularly for those who are new to meet people and find a niche of belonging. So, please plan on attending September 30 – October 2. We will gather at [Laurelville Retreat Center](#) about 50 minutes from Pittsburgh in the Laurel Highlands.

Registration opened on Sunday, August 14 and closes on Sunday, September 18.

We are once more offering significantly subsidized rates on food and accommodation. In addition to general subsidies, we will offer scholarships so that financing the weekend is not a barrier to coming. You are welcome to come for the entire weekend and stay overnight. There are about seventy rooms with ensuite bathrooms and many other types of accommodation with shared bathrooms. If you don't want to stay overnight, coming for a day trip is possible too – either Saturday or Sunday.

We hope to use as much of the great Western Pennsylvania outdoor space as we can. If it's a cooler weekend, please bring your woolies because we hope to have all of the huge garage-style doors on our main meeting space as open as possible for maximum air flow. We are also permitted to take meals outside to eat as well.

We are very glad to announce that our newly consecrated bishop, Alex Cameron, along with his wife Tamara, will be with us for the weekend. The theme of the retreat is The Good Shepherd, and what better way to examine that theme than with the Chief Shepherd of our Diocese, the bishop himself! There will be opportunity to get to know Bishop Alex and Tamara – informally and with a couple other more formal opportunities.



We hope you will consider coming. As mentioned, registration began mid-August. All you need is on our website at [www.ascensionpittsburgh.org](http://www.ascensionpittsburgh.org). We encourage online registration as much as possible, and payment via [Easy Tithe](#). You can also get more information at our retreat table on Sundays. If you need to know more about the program or weekend in general, don't hesitate to reach out to me. If you have questions specific to registration, please contact our registrar, Deacon Jess, at [jess.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:jess.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org).



## Newcomer Cookout

Sunday, September 4 at 5:00 pm

If you are new to Ascension over the past year or two, we'd love you to join us the first Sunday in September for a newcomer cookout! Join Ascension clergy, staff and other members for great food and an informal "get to know you" time. Kids are welcome! We will meet under the tent on Sunday, September 4 from 5:00 – 7:30 pm. Come ready to eat, to chat, and to have some fun! Please bring a side dish or dessert to share. Let us know you are coming by [filling out the form on our website](#), or email [marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org).



## Ascension 'Town Hall' Meeting

Wednesday, September 7 at 7:00 pm

Join the rector for a meeting to discuss upcoming construction and the impact on parish life. All welcome to attend



## Explore Ascension

Saturday, September 10 from 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Interested in learning more about Ascension? Anglican history? Contemplating membership? Want to get to know clergy and staff? Please join us on Saturday, September 10 from 1:00 – 4:00 pm for a great afternoon designed for those who are brand new, those who have been around for a few months and still feel 'newish', those who want to know more about Ascension and Anglicanism, as well as for those who want to become members. Childcare is provided. Please RSVP by [filling out the form on our website](#) or email [jess.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:jess.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org) and let Jess know you hope to join us.



## Pictorial Directory

Ascension has a pictorial directory (password protected ... ask a member of staff) on our website. We'd love your picture. It's such a good way to be known and get to know others. If you are willing, please send a high-resolution photo along with names of those on the picture to [ascensionpictorialdirectory@gmail.com](mailto:ascensionpictorialdirectory@gmail.com).

# Who's Who

If you would like a look at the entire Ascension congregation to see Who's Who, we have an online pictorial directory that is password protected. Please ask a receptionist or member of staff for the password. For now, this is a Who's Who of Ascension's Clergy/Staff team and generally most people you'll see participating as clergy on a Sunday morning. Some are full-time, some are part-time, and some are volunteer. Hopefully this snapshot will be of help to those who are new among us.

## Clergy and Program Staff



The Rev. Canon Jonathan Millard  
Rector

[jonathan.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:jonathan.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



The Rev. Kevin Antlitz  
Assistant Rector

[kevin.antlitz@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:kevin.antlitz@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



The Ven. Dr. Mark Stevenson  
Parish Deacon (non-stipendiary)

[mstevenson@tsm.edu](mailto:mstevenson@tsm.edu)



Marilyn Chislaghi  
Director of Ministry

[marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



The Rev. Andrea Millard, D.Min.  
Director of Prayer Ministry & Leadership Development (part-time)

[andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



The Rev. Alex Banfield Hicks  
Director of Youth and College Ministry

[alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



Leah Hornfeck  
CCO Campus Ministry Staff & Associate for Youth and College Ministries

[lhornfeck@ccojubilee.org](mailto:lhornfeck@ccojubilee.org)



Chris Kirkland  
CCO Campus Ministry Staff & Graduate Student Ministry

[ckirkland@ccojubilee.org](mailto:ckirkland@ccojubilee.org)



Catherine Slocum  
Director of Children's Ministry

[catherine.slocum@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:catherine.slocum@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



LuAnn Pengidore  
Director of International Ministry

[PittsburghEnglish4u@gmail.com](mailto:PittsburghEnglish4u@gmail.com)



The Rev. Daniel Behrens  
Missionary in Residence (Immigrant/Refugee Ministry)

[behrendg1@gmail.com](mailto:behrendg1@gmail.com)





Chris Massa  
 Director of Music and  
 Worship Arts  
[chris.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:chris.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



Elise Massa  
 Assistant Director of Music  
 and Worship Arts (part-time)  
[elise.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:elise.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



Jeanne Kohn  
 Organist (part-time)  
[jeanne.kohn@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:jeanne.kohn@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



Jane Banfield Hicks  
 Children's Choir Director  
 (part-time)  
[jbanfieldhicks@gmail.com](mailto:jbanfieldhicks@gmail.com)

## Ascension Fellows

Ascension Fellows are with us for 2 – 3 years in a pastoral development program, preparing for a career as life-long Anglican clergy.



The Rev. Jess Bennett  
 Deacon  
[jess.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:jess.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



The Rev. Josh Bennett  
 Deacon  
[josh.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:josh.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

## Liturgical Assistants (volunteer)

Liturgical Assistants at Ascension are clergy who are not on staff but make Ascension their church home and the rector has invited to assist in leading worship and preaching from time to time.



The Rev. Dr. Jack Gabig  
 Associate Professor of  
 Practical Theology, Trinity  
 School for Ministry  
[jack.gabig@tsm.edu](mailto:jack.gabig@tsm.edu)



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Grant  
 LeMarquand  
 Professor of New Testament,  
 Trinity School for Ministry  
[bishopgrant777@gmail.com](mailto:bishopgrant777@gmail.com)



The Rev. Dr. Joel Scandrett  
 Associate Professor of  
 Historical Theology, Trinity  
 School for Ministry  
[jscandrett@tsm.edu](mailto:jscandrett@tsm.edu)



The Rev. Lauren Scharf  
 D.Min. Student at Trinity  
 School for Ministry  
[lwscharf@gmail.com](mailto:lwscharf@gmail.com)



The Rev. Ann Tefft  
 Director of Ascension's Senior  
 Ministry (LEGACY)  
[tefft.ann@gmail.com](mailto:tefft.ann@gmail.com)

# Who's Who, Cont.

## Administrative Staff



Karen Gowdy  
Director of Administration  
[karen.gowdy@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:karen.gowdy@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



Stacey Regan  
Secretary  
[stacey.regan@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:stacey.regan@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



Nicole DeLuca  
Bookkeeper (part-time)  
[nicole.deluca@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:nicole.deluca@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



Ruth Hartling  
Receptionist (part-time)



Kelsey Nienna  
Receptionist (part-time)

## Facility Staff



Isaiah Bornman  
Director of Maintenance  
[isaiah.bornman@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:isaiah.bornman@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



Josh Momaney  
Custodian



Jorge Ortiz  
Custodian

# International Ministry is Off to a Great Start!



By LuAnn Pengidore, Director of International Ministry  
[PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com](mailto:PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com)

**O**n Monday, September 12th, 28 teachers or assistants and four childcare workers will kick off the 2022 English and International Program year that runs through May 12, 2023. Over the summer, Timmy Podnar, M.J. Botula, Mariana Gowdy, Daniel Behrens, and LuAnn Pengidore have been hard at work behind the scenes. They have been advertising, attending field trips, meeting and testing new students, recruiting new teachers and assistants, linking students up to resources and conversation partners, and giving vision and input to the process. This summer, internationals attended Acoustic Soul, a Pittsburgh Pirates games, gratefully participated in the baptism of Thu Phan, enjoyed a night of music playing instruments, and participated in the Parish Day Away at Laurelville.

After the July teacher's meeting which had about 30 volunteers in attendance, the international program is responding to the request to go deeper with students seeking quality, not quantity. We will reduce the number of class days to Monday (mornings and evenings) and Wednesday (mornings and evenings) for two 14-week semesters. The 12 classes we will host include pronunciation, grammar, writing, and Tedtalks. Fortunately, we are bringing

the classes back in person and offer 3 childcare times on Monday morning, Wednesday morning and Wednesday evening. One exciting new class that will draw from LEGACY (Senior) parishioners will be offered at 10:00 am on Wednesdays as a rotating conversation café with students.

On the Bible study front, we are especially excited to hold another exploratory Alpha-type class focusing on the good news of the Christian story taught by Robin Capcara and facilitated by Timmy Podnar. On Monday mornings, Erika Twichell and Lu Ann Pengidore will teach a Bible study after class. Mike and Betty Kaszer from St. Stephens, Sewickley will host a Tuesday study of the Jesus Storybook Bible. As for community groups, Yuyu and Xin Zhou as well as Timmy Podnar are continuing their online international community group each Wednesday evening at 7:00 pm.

We are thankful for the 16 parishioners who serve as conversation partners, thereby forming friendships with students as they meet and talk each week, discuss cultural questions, and (depending on the person's interests), discuss Scripture or pray together. For example, Christine Thieman has disciplesd 4 different women on the attributes of God as a conversation partner.



## Who we are

We befriend our international neighbors by offering opportunities to learn English, American culture, and the life and love of Jesus.

## Roles

Field Trip drivers  
 Drivers for appts  
 Conversation partners and tutors  
 ESL teachers and assistants  
 Help with our CIAC clinic



If you would like to volunteer with internationals on work days at Open Hand Ministries, come alongside them as they cook for Shepherd's Heart, open your home to an international, assist in a class, or welcome a newly arrived family, contact Lu Ann Pengidore at [PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com](mailto:PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com). If you are particularly interested in serving refugees, you may begin a conversation with Daniel Behrens at [behrensdg1@gmail.com](mailto:behrensdg1@gmail.com).

All involved thank God for the opportunity to be involved in this ministry! As it says in the book of Ephesians: "God is able to do far more than we could ever ask for or imagine. He does everything by his power that is working in us. Give him glory in the church and in Christ Jesus. Give him glory through all time and for ever and ever. Amen."

# Children are Welcomed, Seen, and Loved at Ascension



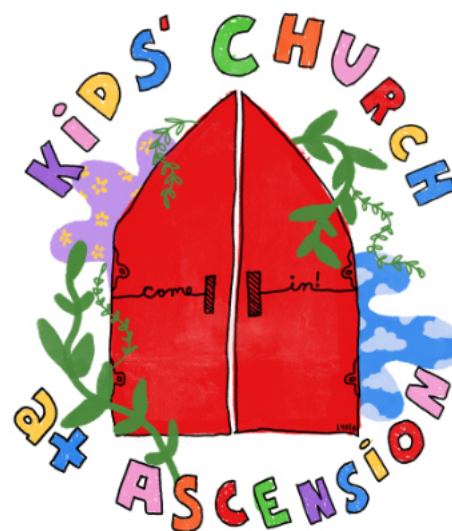
By Catherine Slocum, Director of Children's Ministries  
[catherine.slocum@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:catherine.slocum@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

**A**t Church of the Ascension children are welcomed, seen, and loved! Sunday mornings are filled with numerous opportunities for children of all ages to engage in worship. Children's activity bins can be found in the back of the nave each week, our clergy take time to talk with the children about an important Gospel truth during each of our worship services. Our Kids' Church program is held weekly in our children's chapel and uses both an in-house crafted lectionary-based curriculum along with the Godly Play curriculum. The engaging lessons are designed to use their whole bodies, the environment, and a wide variety of resources. Thanks to our loving teaching team, over the course of the year our children will learn from nine distinct teaching series that complement our church year and lectionary readings.

The children will engage in a variety of other meaningful ways beyond regular classes on Sundays. They will take part in an Advent Make and Give project, help tell the Christmas story through a pageant on Christmas Eve, participate in "The Way of the Cross," a Good Friday program designed to help children understand Jesus' death and resurrection, and will be welcomed to join in our annual Easter Egg Hunt on the church lawn on Easter Sunday. Families are invited to create lifelong traditions by attending our annual Parish Retreat weekend away in Laurelville, delve deeper into a meaningful prayer life during Lent, and sing songs led by our music team all year long!

Take a moment to register your children using this link: [Infant - 5th grade Children's Ministry Registration](#) (also on our website). Registering your children each year helps us have up to date information and know your intentions to have your children participate in our church programs and plan more accurately.

If you would like to volunteer with children's ministry, we have many roles to fill – nursery care, nursery bible story time leader, Kids' Church team, Children's Ministry Prayer team, helping with our Parish Retreat, helping with set up and clean up for any of our children's programs, overseeing the children's library to name a few! Please email me to find out more!





# LEGACY: Ascension Seniors Ministry



By Ann Tefft, Director of Legacy Seniors Ministry

[tefft.ann@gmail.com](mailto:tefft.ann@gmail.com)

**W**e are excited to announce that our seniors ministry, formerly known as OWLS (Older, Wiser, Lively Saints), has changed its name to LEGACY: Ascension Seniors Ministry. A legacy in the Lord means each Christian sharing with others what gifts and abilities the Lord has blessed them with - something each of us is called to do and something as seniors we want to give special focus to.

A legacy endures. It's about passing on things of lasting value to those who will live on after us. Legacy involves living intentionally and aiming to build into the next generations for their success. Our belief in Jesus Christ is THE legacy that lasts.

Instead of having nothing to say on the subject, the Bible informs our idea of legacy, as we ask, "What is most significant to pass on to future generations, and how should we go about it?" Consider these verses:

- **Psalm 78.4:** We will not hide them from their children; *we will tell to the coming generation* the glorious deeds of the Lord and his might and the wonders that he has done.
- **Psalm 145.4:** *One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.*
- **Ephesians 6.4:** Fathers, do not

exasperate your children; instead, *bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

- **John 15.16:** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should *go and bear fruit* and that your *fruit should abide*, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.
- **1 Peter 4.10:** Each of you should use *whatever gift you have received to serve others*, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

As these verses instruct us, as seniors we wish to leave a legacy by sharing stories of what God has done, illustrating guiding truths by instruction and example, and using every opportunity to serve and bless others.

## Fall Program

LEGACY has a wonderful program planned for the upcoming year:

- September 8: Our kick-off luncheon will be held on September 8th with Ascension's Director of Ministry, Marilyn Chislaghi, speaking about her recent trip to the Holy Land. We all know what an indefatigable worker Marilyn is, and she's going to share with us what she learned about rest in the Holy Land. In addition to inspiring, her talk will include a photographic journey through this special land where our Lord once walked.

To better accommodate our programming, the remainder of Legacy's

meetings will be held on the third Thursday of every month.

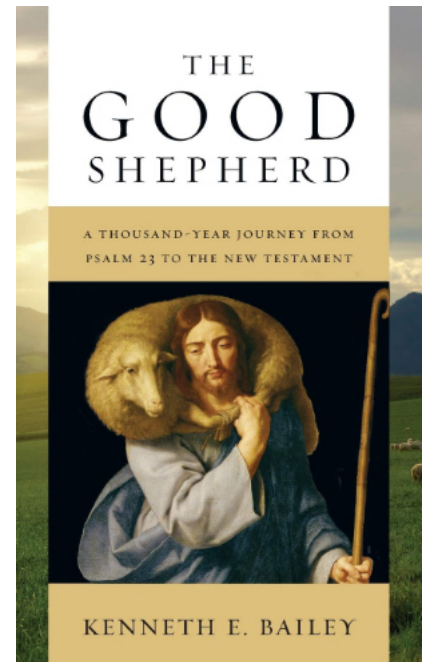
- **October 20:** At our October 20th meeting the Revs. Jonathan and Andrea Millard will speak on Nunc Dimittis: Departing in Peace.
- **November 17:** Daniel Behrens will share with us his vision for refugee ministry and what opportunities there **may be for us to serve.**
- **December 15:** We will have a wonderful Christmas celebration on December 15th with a service and luncheon in the nave.

## Fall Bible Study

Back by popular demand, LEGACY will be conducting a Bible study using *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament*, written by Dr. Kenneth E. Bailey, after whom, with his wife Ethel, our new parish hall will be named. During his 40 years in the Middle East Ken studied the culture and mannerisms of the area. Ken was fluent in Arabic and no doubt had many interesting conversations during his travels. He has written several books and has taught

and lectured in the US and the Middle East throughout his career as a New Testament scholar.

What is also exciting is that this book is dedicated to John and Susan Bailey and John has graciously volunteered to lead our study! The format of our meetings will include commentary by John, excellent videos, and group discussion of what we are learning. We will meet on the following Tuesdays: September 29, October 4 and 25, November 8 and December 6. Please order your books from the Hearts and Minds Book Store. All who attend will be blessed so please see the flyer found in the nave for additional information and come join us.

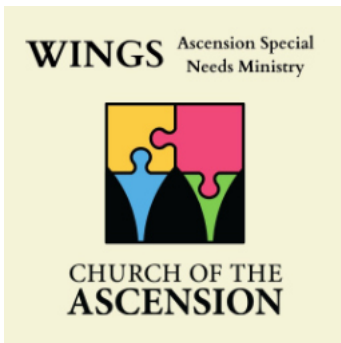


# Ascension Special Needs Ministry



By Josh Bennett, Ascension Fellow

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What does it mean to be made in God's image? What does it mean to be those whom

God loves and adores? How does the good news of Christ meet us, as individuals and as a community, right here and right now?

On one hand, the answers to questions like these are simple, and yet these are the questions we will be pondering and internalizing for all of eternity. We can easily think, "Well I know what it means to be made in God's image" or "I know that I am loved by God" and then as we walk with the Lord in the

community of his saints, the Lord has a way of taking us deeper and deeper into the depths of such truth.

So often he uses our sisters and brothers to draw us ever deeper. It is through the observations of another, the love and grace that they share, and through the act of journeying through life together that the Lord pulls not only our minds but our hearts ever closer to himself. Take for instance our brother James' column *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, in which he interviews other members of the Special Needs community to share with us their needed perspectives and stories. It is as we come together, in all of our neurodiversity, that we believe we will hear the Lord speaking to us, through one another, in sweet ways.

## When we meet

This communal journey ever deeper

into God's love is the hope of our Special Needs Ministry. We meet every 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month at 10:30 am for a time of worship, creativity, learning, meditation, and discussion. Our teacher, Beth Christensen, leads us in those times together. On either the 2nd or 4th Sunday of the month, we will meet at 10:30 am to do a service project — to bless those in our church and community.

## Want to join us?

If you would like more information on what your participation in our Special Needs Ministry might look like, please send me an email. We always welcome fellow parishioners who want to build relationships with those who have special needs, participate alongside them in our classes and projects, and join this community in its journey deeper into the love of God.

# Fearfully and Wonderfully Made



By James Scannell

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**F**or this issue James, a young adult at Ascension who has non-speaking autism and communicates via a spelling board, is interviewing another young adult - Stephen Schaad. Stephen is a participant in Ascension's Special Needs Ministry. He has been attending for many years with his parents, Joe and Judy Schaad.

"Let every creature rise and bring/  
Peculiar honors to our King;  
Angels descend with songs again/  
And earth repeat the loud 'Amen!'"

I have been meditating on these lines from a hymn for some time now. Peculiar can mean "unique"; it can also mean "odd". We are all both unique and odd. God delights in our particular individuality and in our strange quirks. He has patience and does not require uniformity. In my interviews I hope to celebrate people with differences since God loves us all.

For this issue I interviewed Stephen Schaad with his mom Judy. We all needed Judy to keep us on track! What follows is a condensed version of our conversation.

**James:** Stephen, I am so glad to be with you today. I'd like to start by asking how you spend your days.

**Stephen:** On Mondays I swim. On Thursdays I go bowling. I help out at the house with cleaning and sometimes cook.

**James:** What do you like to cook?

**Stephen:** Hot dogs!

**Judy:** Stephen also volunteers twice a week at a nursing home. He passes out pitchers of ice, assists with Bingo, and then helps the residents he calls "the girls" back to their rooms by pushing their wheelchairs.

**James:** Tell me what you enjoy about church.

**Stephen:** God! Singing. Friends at WINGS like Holden and Beth. Passing the peace.

**Judy:** Stephen loves social time after church and Laurelville. He is an extrovert!

**James:** Do you have a favorite worship song?

**Stephen:** "There is a Redeemer!"

**James:** What do you like to do for fun?

**Stephen:** Put up the Christmas tree.

**Judy:** Stephen loves Christmas!

**Stephen:** Seeing "A Christmas Carol" at the Byham.

**James:** What do you like during non-Christmastime?



**Stephen:** Going out to dinner for my birthday, hikes in the park, going to the science center, movies, reading books, and Special Olympics.

**James:** What sports do you do in Special Olympics?

**Stephen:** Soccer, baseball, and track. I've won medals.

**James:** I love it. I'm so impressed. I'm curious about how you pray. Is it mostly by singing?

**Stephen:** Yes. I also ask to pray for the sick.

**James:** You especially care about praying for the sick. That is an important gift you give to the church. Stephen, I like you so much. You are so kind and warm. I'm so glad you are at our church.

Stephen smiles. (A big, wonderful smile.)



# Why do we Bother with Church Membership?



By Jess Bennett, Ascension Fellow

[jess.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:jess.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

**I**f you've been in and around Ascension for a little while, it's likely you've witnessed new members being welcomed on a Sunday — equally likely that you yourself have been invited to consider becoming a member.

For many of us, we might wonder why we ought to bother. After all, you can worship here, give, participate in a community group, and really most areas of life at Ascension without “signing the papers.”

I understand that hesitancy.

It seems that the idea of “Membership” (to anything!) is becoming increasingly irrelevant in our culture. The term “Membership,” at least for me, smacks of country clubs or labor unions, things that don't necessarily touch my life. Either that, or it's lost its weight of meaning altogether — the Bennetts are proud members of the Pittsburgh Zoo, which of course gets us in the gates for free but requires nothing of us personally. The truth is, we're more “subscription”-type folks: sign up — preferably for the first month free! — reap the benefits, “cancel anytime.”

So why would a church bother with the idea of membership? Why should you bother with membership?

Christians might answer this question different ways; but a few significant reasons come to my mind.

The first — and how very Anglican of me — is that there is something sacramental about it. To become a member is to “formalize” your commitment to a local body of Christians, but it's not just a formality.

It matters, it serves as a visible sign of the inward reality of your commitment to the family of God, particularly through this local body of Anglican believers in Pittsburgh. It's your commitment to love them, to enter the presence of God regularly together in worship, to share your life with them. Just as it means something deeply to sign marriage papers, adoption papers, the deed of your home — it means something to take this step of commitment to the local church.

This kind of commitment — unlike my Zoo membership — requires something of you, and this is my second point. In a culture that trains us to consume to no end, to reap the benefits of a service until it no longer suits our desires, a commitment of this level is entirely upside-down. To pledge myself to walk with Jesus in relationship with His body, to give of my own resources and time for the sake of the church and her mission, to truly say my life is not my own — this is entirely counter-cultural, but the Apostle Paul would argue that that's where the good stuff is (see Colossians 3:12-17). Membership puts you in a position to not only consume, but to give and serve — because these are your people now, this is your community.

Lastly, and this may be a hard sell, but the sense of belonging that accompanies membership also means opening oneself to accountability. To become a member of a church is to submit to that community — to its leaders, and to your fellow brothers and sisters (Hebrews 13:17). And I would argue this is a very good thing. As a member, you allow others to have a say in your life, in how you conduct yourself. You allow the clergy to know

you, and to speak words of challenge when necessary. Our mutual commitment frees us to sharpen one another, to build one another up, as we run this race.

- If you've worshiped among us and have yet to take the step toward membership, we invite you to. The process is quite simple!
- Attend Explore Ascension, a Saturday class offered quarterly, led by one of our Rectors — registration is open for our next one happening **Saturday, September 10th from 1:00 – 4:00 pm**
- Sign and submit a very short application and schedule a personal meeting with Father Jonathan Millard or Father Kevin Antlitz.
- In the application, you will be asked if you agree to abide by the “Canons and Constitutions of the Anglican Church of North America (ACNA)” — which you can find and read via Google!
- Once completed, you will be formally welcomed on a Sunday morning along with other new members!

Ascension is not a perfect church. Far from it. What's more, it's possible — even likely — that our habits, programs, and worship practices don't always fit with your preferences. And that's okay! As Christians, our call is not to create an idyllic oasis, unspoiled by human imperfection or diversity of thought. Our call is to be the body of Christ, in unity and commitment to one another: precisely in our imperfections, differing views, and the messiness of our humanity.

You're invited to consider becoming a member among us. Let's make this official.

# ASCENSION FOUNDATIONS: A Spiritual Formation Course This Fall



By Kevin Antlitz, Assistant Rector  
[kevin.antlitz@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:kevin.antlitz@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

**I**n his massive book, *A Secular Age*, philosopher Charles Taylor traces the seismic shifts that have shaken western society over the last few centuries. As he writes in his Introduction, the aim of his book is to examine how we move “from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others.” Unlike the religious for most of human history, we now live in a world where “belief in God is no longer axiomatic.” We now live in a secular age. Another way of describing our context is that we now live in a post-Christian culture.

This reality has many implications. One of the implications of this is that – broadly speaking – our culture’s understanding of the Bible, of who Jesus is, and the central tenets of Christianity are near all-time low. One of the things this means is that there are fewer people who identify as Christians. Perhaps less obviously, living in a secular age also impacts Christians. I think many folks who identify as Christians feel unsure about their faith – both what they believe and why. Many of us, in other words, experience a lack of clarity and confidence about what we believe.

As in every age, we have a tremendous need to be formed in the faith. In order to address this need, we are excited to offer Foundations again this fall.

## What is Foundations?

As the name indicates, this course exists to establish a foundational understanding of the Christian faith. Our vision is that Foundations would foster clarity and confidence in the core beliefs and practices of the Church.



To help us grow in clarity and confidence, we will explore four crucial questions: What makes us Christians? How do we pray? What should we believe? How do we live?

To answer these questions, we will devote our attention to the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), and the Apostles' Creed (our most ancient statement of faith). In addition to these three essentials, we will also cover the Bible, the sacraments, and even some Anglican history to help get a sense of the distinctives of Ascension's tradition.

The course meets for 12 sessions and will be taught by Father Kevin and Deacon Josh, with other clergy popping in. The day/time is still TBD but will likely be Thursday evenings in the Hunt Rooms. Childcare is available.

## Who is Foundations for?

Foundations is for anyone with a desire to grow in their walk with Jesus. This course is particularly good for newer folks who want to get plugged in to the Ascension community and learn more about the church. I think this course might be particularly interesting for people who are interested in becoming members of Ascension and for adults who are pursuing Confirmation.

One way to think of Foundations is an intensive discipleship cohort or a Community Group with a semester long commitment. Whether you are brand new to Ascension or you've been around for 50 years and want to mix things up, this course is for you. All of this to say is Foundations is open to everyone. We hope you'll consider joining us!

If you have questions, you can reach out to me or Deacon Josh ([josh.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:josh.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org)). You can reserve a spot for Foundations using the sign-up form on the Ascension website.

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# Praise & Prayer: A Weekly Email Ministry of Intercession



By Andrea Millard, Director of Prayer Ministry & Leadership Development  
[andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

Throughout the course of a week, we receive prayer requests and thanksgivings from a variety of sources – Sunday's written prayer requests, through the website, via phone calls, etc. Our team of intercessors, the people who pray for those requests, pray for those joys and needs as they are compiled into a confidential email. (We include in this email requests from those who have indicated they want prayer support.)

This weekly email includes the first name and last initial of the person making the request (or the one in need of prayer) along with a brief recap of the praise report or the challenge being faced. Sometimes folks prefer to be included in this ministry anonymously, so we are happy to use generic language (like a man, a woman, a child) to honor their wishes.

These emails provide a way of "rejoicing with those who rejoice" as individuals thank God for his many blessings – health, family, friends, employment, etc. It is also a way of "bearing one another's burdens" as individuals invite additional prayer support during difficult times like grief, sickness, family crisis, unemployment, addiction, discernment, etc. If you would like to know more about our Praise & Prayer ministry, please contact Andrea Millard.

# Warm Welcomes and Hard Goodbyes



By Daniel Behrens, Ascension Missionary in Residence  
[behrensdg1@gmail.com](mailto:behrensdg1@gmail.com); (412) 352-6643

**T**his is a story of warm welcomes and hard goodbyes.

Naser is a young man from Afghanistan who came to Pittsburgh this year as a refugee. Through an Iranian friend, he heard about the ESL classes at Ascension and came to sign up. Thanks to an invitation from LuAnn, he and his housemate came to our Saturday evening worship service on April 30th. I was helping to distribute communion that evening and had the privilege of praying for God's blessing on these two men from a Muslim background.

The next time I saw him and his housemate, we went to the library to get on a waiting list for a Wi-Fi hotspot. Back at his rented duplex in Greenfield, he insisted on running inside to bring out a cold Corona for me. I relished the irony of receiving a Mexican beer from an Afghan refugee...in Pittsburgh.

Naser's resettlement agency connected him with a fulltime job at a packing plant that is an hour's bus ride from home. Despite having long workdays, he wanted to work more hours at night to have more money to send home for his parents and four younger siblings in Kabul. LuAnn and I had looked at a lot of possibilities for night jobs, so when I visited him the next time, I was eager to work on this practical need. He welcomed me warmly and invited me inside the apartment. I sat in his bare living room and tried to decline more gifts (Hershey bars this time). He asked about my wife and children, asked about my job, showed pictures of his family, and described the hardships of life under the Taliban. Forty-five minutes later we set out to the bank to attempt to open a checking account. I am starting to learn that "being listened to" is a practical need too.



Naser remained in contact, and even came to church again one Sunday morning. Then, in late June, while we were at the hospital with our newborn daughter, I got the text "Hello bro how are you everything is good. Today my last day in Pittsburgh... Tomorrow I have flights." Naser said he was going to South Carolina, and I still don't know why. It was a hard, unexpected, unsatisfying goodbye.

Was it worth it to spend that time with Naser? I had exciting ideas of where the connection with him might lead. Would he find a good life in Pittsburgh? Would he come to faith in Jesus? Would he be part of our

church? To have those “What-if?’s” dashed with a text message was painful.


Is there something for me to learn from this hard goodbye, or lack of a goodbye? Was it worth it? I am still wrestling with the question but have a few thoughts.

First, I am confident that I have been enriched by knowing him. He welcomed me into his life, sharing what he could, just as much as I tried to welcome him. When I see Afghanistan in the news, I now think of his four younger siblings and parents, and I wonder if they are OK.

Second, I have to remind myself that his story is not over, even if we do not see the next chapters. Who can say how his experiences in our church community will shape him and his whole family as his journey continues?

This is my encouragement when the hard goodbyes come: Let’s warmly welcome those like Naser who come into our lives, especially those who had to leave their homes. We do not know how many opportunities we will get, so value each interaction! This is true in all relationships but is especially obvious with people who are navigating major life transitions. We may see someone come to faith and get established or we may not. All of our efforts to welcome are sustained by our Lord’s promise: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me...as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” (Matt. 25:35, 40, ESV)

We are serving the Lord Jesus, in each warm welcome, and in each hard goodbye. Thank you, Naser, for the opportunity!



## Pathways to Flourishing: An Introduction to Ascension’s Ministry to Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Low-income Immigrants.

Lunch and Learn with  
Daniel Behrens, Jen Tinker and Kathleen Oliver



Sunday, August 28 after 11am service

## Music & Worship Arts

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# The Secret SAUCE of Singing in the Choir



By Chris Massa, Director of Music and Worship Arts  
[chris.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:chris.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

**B**y the time you read this, the 2022-23 choir season has already begun, and there's a good chance you've heard a handful of anthems and noticed the additional voices on the hymns - particularly if you regularly attend the 11:00 am service. You also may have noticed something else, something that's a little difficult to put into words. Yes, there is something special about the way voices blend in a choir, but it's more than that. It's sort of like eating a good meal. Even if you can pick out the individual flavors, the way that they blend and complement each other can be surprising. Not unlike a meal, the secret is in the SAUCE. Specifically—and I'm taking a cue from Kurtis Parks and his book, *Sound Check: How Worship Teams Can Pursue Authenticity, Excellence, and Purpose*—it's a combination of Service, Authenticity, Unity, Creativity, and Excellence.

### Service

Psalm 98 begins with the following exhortation: "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. With his own right hand and with his holy arm, he has won for himself the victory." The term "for himself" is key here, and it makes an important point about worship in general: It is for God. Yes, of course we will be blessed by spending time in God's presence, and yes, worship can (and dare I say, should) be a pleasing and even fun experience, but that doesn't mean it's primarily for our benefit. True worship begins and ends with God, and as true as this is for all of us, I believe it is particularly true for those in leadership roles, including choir members. If you want to serve your church family and worship God, giving him the glory, then the choir may be a perfect fit.

### Authenticity

"Authenticity" has become a buzzword as of late, thrown around haphazardly as a way of defending and justifying just about anything, but we shouldn't let the trendiness of the word distract us from the fact that God is looking for those who will worship him "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24, emphasis mine). When we show up for choir rehearsal, we're not just bringing our voices; we're bringing ourselves, complete with our foibles, our shortcomings, and yes, our sins. While I don't view the choir as a community group per se, it has some of the same DNA: We care about each other, we pray for each other, and we're willing to offer loving correction when it is appropriate. Which means we need to be authentic before God, and each other.

### Unity

We are living in a divided world and a divided country. (Shocking, I know.) And as polarized as our communities often are, our churches are not much better, too frequently divided by

politics, race, socioeconomic status, and even age. There are many ways of addressing this, of “reaching across the aisles” to people who don’t look like you or may see things differently, and I’d like to suggest that singing in a choir is a particularly good way of doing so. When a choir comes together, the differences between us may be very real (see the above section on “Authenticity”), but we are united by a shared purpose. (A brief aside: A dream of mine is for the choir here at Ascension to be more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity. If you see the choir and lament that there aren’t more people who look like you, I’d like to suggest that you rectify this situation by joining.)



## Creativity

Amid all the debate about how Genesis 1 should (or should not) be interpreted, there’s one thing that should be abundantly clear to all who read it: God created. God, in other words, is an artist, which means that, when we are creative, we give homage to our Creator. Art, music, and creativity are not intended as the pretty margin around our lives; they are an intrinsic part of who we are and who we’ve been made to be. I will readily admit to being something of a restless

creative, a person who loves to think outside the box, and I tend to view a choir rehearsal as something like a playground, an opportunity to experiment, try new things, and to play. If you want to explore your God-given creativity, the choir may be just the place to do so.

## Excellence

The choir at Ascension is not an auditioned group. If you approach me and say that you want to be in the choir, it’s likely that I will want to hear you sing, but it won’t be so I can tell you if you’re in or out; it will be so I know where you and your voice will best fit. (There may be cases where I’d recommend some steps to take before joining the choir, but it would all be with the intention of bringing you in, not keeping you out.) I want the choir to be a place where people with a wide variety of skills and abilities can serve together to the best of their ability, and I will do my best to be encouraging. However - and this is very important - I will repeatedly ask you to do better, and I will push myself to do the best I can, as well. This isn’t just because I like it when a choir sings together and in tune, although I do; it’s because fostering our gifts is a crucial part of our creative calling. In a way, growing and improving as musicians and artists is a picture of what discipleship means, of putting faith into practice, and doing this in community is a microcosm of what the church should look like.

I hope it’s clear that the purpose of this article isn’t to say how wonderful and unique the choir at Ascension is, but to try to articulate some of the vision for what the choir is and why it does what it does. And, perhaps just as importantly, I want to extend an invitation to you. If this sounds like the kind of ministry you want to be a part of - if you want to experience some of the SAUCE for yourself - talk to me about joining the choir. It would be a joy to sing and serve with you.

# Prayer Ministry



By Andrea Millard, Director of Prayer Ministry & Leadership Development  
[andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



## Autumn Soul Care

9:30 – 11:00 am, Hunt Rooms/Courtyard  
 Saturdays: September 17, October 22, November 12

*Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*  
 Matt 11:28-30

Soul Care mornings are designed to enter the Lord's presence in quietness and trust. We begin and end each gathering in silent prayer, and throughout the morning we leave plenty of space to listen and learn and rest in God. We take a slower pace as we actively listen and quietly meditate on Scripture. And if the weather is nice, we meet in the natural beauty of the courtyard (if not, we meet in the Hunt Rooms).

If you haven't attended a Soul Care morning, maybe this fall you'll give it a try. If you have, welcome back! If you have any questions, please reach out to Andrea Millard, Director of Prayer Ministry ([andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org)). To register, check out the News & Events page.

## 10For@4 10-minute Prayer Gatherings at 4:00 pm (on Zoom)

*Prayer is where the action is - John Wesley*

After taking a summer break, our weekly zoom prayer gatherings are relaunching! 10For@4 is the name for our online interactive groups that pray for the needs of particular populations within our church family and wider community. 10 stands for ten-minutes of focused prayer; For indicates the particular concern or population; and @4 signifies the start time, which is 4:00 pm.

Check it out! The Zoom calls open at 3:45 pm for fellowship, orientation, and preparation. Team leaders then lead the groups into the prayer time promptly at 4:00 for 10-minutes. To join one or more of these prayer gatherings, send an email to the group contact person, who will welcome you and send you a link for the call.

*Mondays: Praying for Internationals*  
 Sophie Bernardi, [sophiedbernardi@gmail.com](mailto:sophiedbernardi@gmail.com)

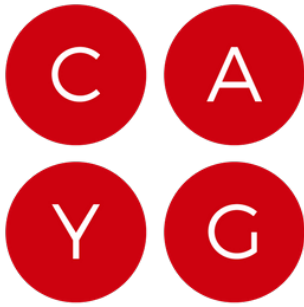
*Tuesdays: Praying for Children & Youth*  
 Jen Newhouse, [niferm@hotmail.com](mailto:niferm@hotmail.com)

*Wednesdays: Praying for Ascension Parishioners*  
 Melita Carter, [cartermo@gmail.com](mailto:cartermo@gmail.com)

*Thursdays: Praying for Peace, Justice & Racial Reconciliation*  
 Hannah Halfhill, [hhalfhill@gmail.com](mailto:hhalfhill@gmail.com)







# Church of the Ascension Youth Group: A Report on the Harrisburg Trip



By Jess Bennett, Ascension Fellow  
[jess.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:jess.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

**O**ur team of 15 — 11 high schoolers and four adult leaders — survived our service week in Harrisburg! (Some witnesses might even claim we had a really good time). Half of the students on our team are from Ascension, and the other half are students who worship at other churches in Pittsburgh yet participate in CAYG, Ascension’s weekly youth gathering.

We were hosted by YouthWorks, an interdenominational ministry who hosts summer service trips at sites all around the U.S. This was CAYG’s second year participating at the Harrisburg site! We joined about five other church groups from all over the country, sleeping in various classrooms of a local host church! We began and ended our days all together as a large group, and split up to various service sites each day.



Our team spent the week working in lots of different areas of ministry — food banks, an assisted living facility, urban gardens and a Salvation Army center to name just a few. We painted, carried rocks, packaged noodles, served meals, and best of all, got to meet local folks in Harrisburg and listen to their stories, and learn about what God is doing in and through His people there.

One highlight of the trip was getting to help with serving lunch in a men’s shelter — being in the space, intentionally observing what we saw around us, and hearing the director share stories of the vision and testimonies that have come from the ministry was a deeply moving experience. At the end of each day, our group sat together to debrief all that we had witnessed and done, and spent time in prayer for each other and the many folks we had met.

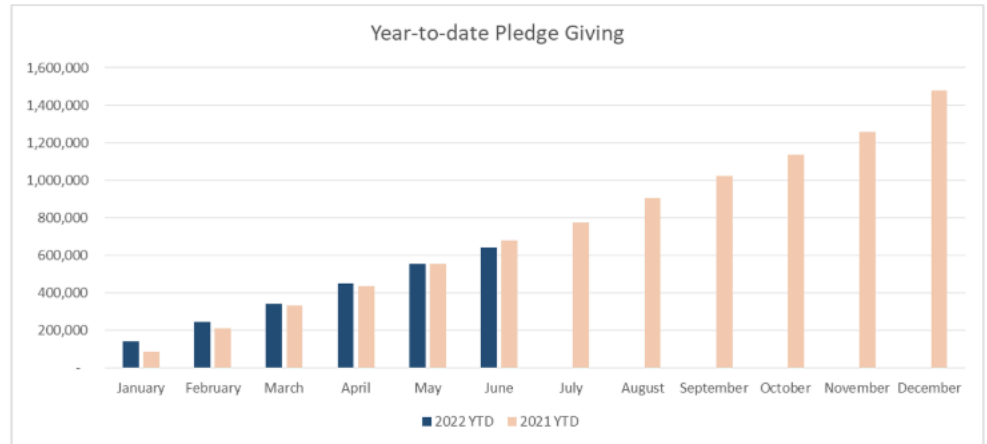
Overall, it was a beautiful experience. Our team was stretched, we were challenged, and we laughed a lot. We are really proud of this group of students, and loved getting to know them better and grow with them this week. We are grateful for your prayers!

# Budget Update

By Sue Crary, Treasurer

[suecrary@gmail.com](mailto:suecrary@gmail.com)

Ascension’s operating budget for 2022 is supported by expected giving of \$1,554,000, of which we budgeted \$714,540 through June. This would be a 5% increase over 2021 giving. Actual giving through June was \$642,540, which is lower than 2021 by almost \$38,000. We are behind on giving by about \$72,000 at this time. While we were expecting challenges with our operating budget through the duration of our *More than Stones Campaign*, we hope that congregational giving will increase in the final six months of our fiscal year.



## You are Invited to New Wineskins

**September 22 - 26**

You are invited to attend the New Wineskins Mission Conference September 22-26 at the Ridgecrest Conference Center in Ridgecrest, NC. Join 1,500 of your fellow Anglicans in worship, fellowship and learning as you meet and hear from Christians from around the world. Listen to amazing testimonies from missionaries and be inspired by Anglicans from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. This conference is for children, teens, young adults, and adults. Ascension financial aid may be available. Contact Denise Cox, Chair of Ascension’s Mission Committee, for more information at [denisecox@sams-usa.org](mailto:denisecox@sams-usa.org).

**New 2022 Wineskins one mission**

Scan code for more info on our website.

**DEVELOP MISSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**  
Leaders, Senders & Missionaries!

**DISCOVER MISSIONAL PURPOSE**  
Mentoring, Prayer & Exhibitors!

**DISCUSS MISSIONAL PREPARATION**  
Adults, Youth & Children of all ages!

**DEEPEN MISSIONAL PASSION**  
Pre-Conferences, Plenaries & MAP Talks!

**DIVERSE MISSIONAL PARTICIPATION**  
Multi-Cultural, In-Person & Virtual

**Register Early & Save!**  
[newwineskinsconference.org](http://newwineskinsconference.org)  
Spanish translation available & multiple sub-title options on livestream!

**SEPTEMBER 22-25**

# Graduate Students



By Chris Kirkland, CCO Graduate Ministry

[ckirkland@ccojubilee.org](mailto:ckirkland@ccojubilee.org)



“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” – Matthew 13:44

**T**his Fall, as Jubilate Graduate Ministry welcomes new and returning graduates students for the next semester, we are launching our new series: **the Parables of Jesus.** We will explore the short stories and images that Christ used to reveal the nature of God and his coming kingdom. Stories and narratives are one of the most natural ways that we communicate truths to one another, and Jesus’ use of parables highlights the connection between ordinary things of life and the divine.

As Eugene Peterson writes, “Jesus continually threw odd stories down alongside ordinary lives (para, ‘alongside’; bole, ‘thrown’) and walked away without explanation or altar call. Then listeners started seeing connections: God connections, life connections, eternity connections. The very lack of obviousness, the unlikeness, was the stimulus to perceiving likeness: God likeness, life likeness, eternity likeness.” I hope that as we explore these stories, we might further connect the ordinary paths of professional and academic careers and the sacred life walk with Christ.

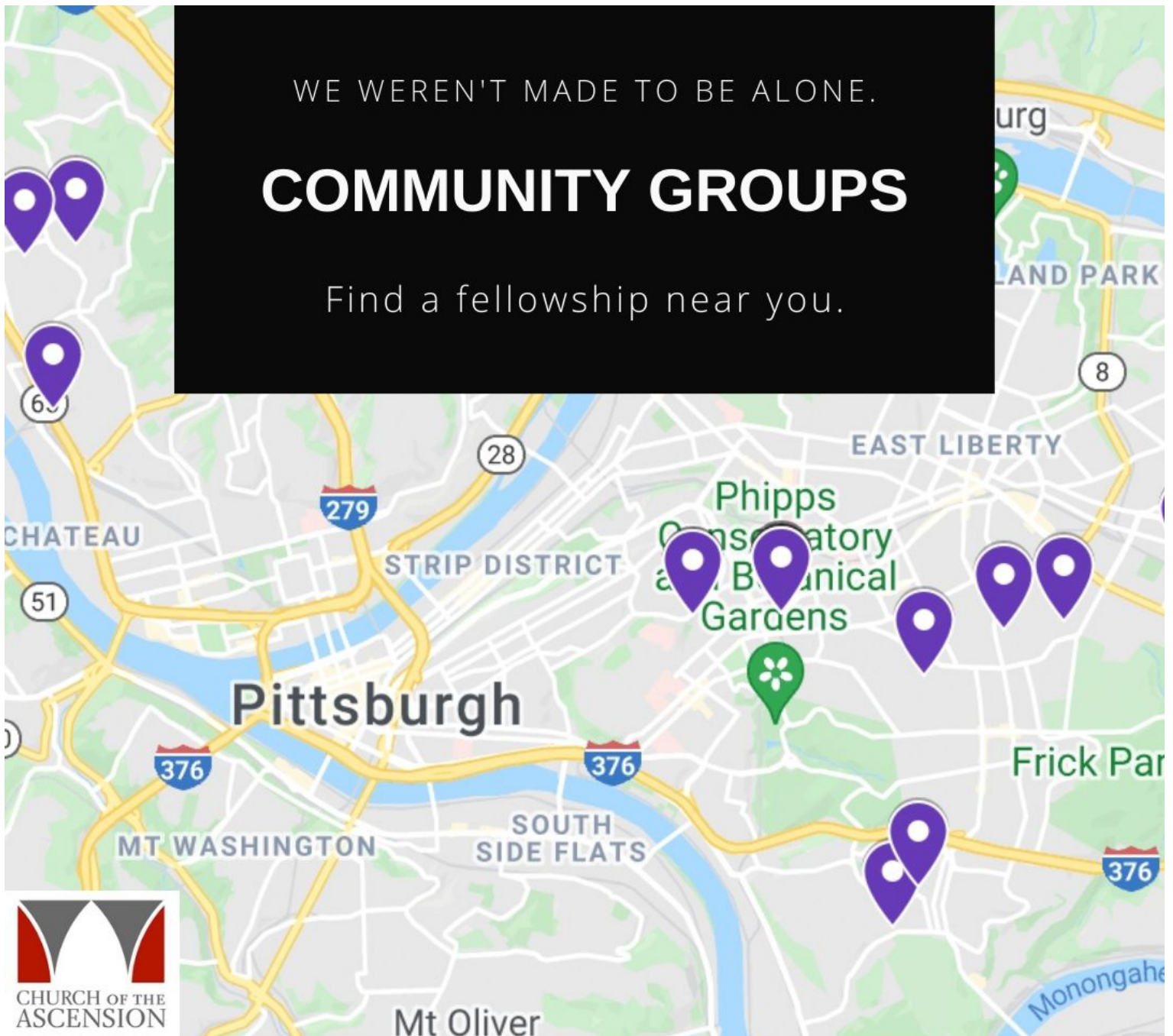
As part of welcoming back students, we invite all Ascension young adults to join us again for another round of Trivia in the Park! We’ll be meeting again Sept. 2nd in Schenley park at 6:00pm for a cookout and a chance to meet each other before playing a game of Trivia. You can find more information on Ascension’s website or contact using the email above. I hope you can join us!

For more information on how Ascension can support you in your graduate studies or can help a Grad student you know, please contact Chris Kirkland.

WE WEREN'T MADE TO BE ALONE.

# COMMUNITY GROUPS

Find a fellowship near you.



Check out Ascension Community Groups on the Community Group Map at [www.ascensionpittsburgh.org](http://www.ascensionpittsburgh.org).

Worship Services **Sunday 9:00 am, 11:00 am Nave Services** with [YouTube](#) live stream.

Website [www.ascensionpittsburgh.org](http://www.ascensionpittsburgh.org)

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Phone/Fax (412) 621-4361 / (412) 621-5746

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A Worshipping Community;  
Equipping God's People; Sharing  
Christ's Healing with a Broken World